

# United States Department of the Interior

## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Mountain-Prairie Region

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NWRS/FIRE  
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Memorandum

To:                    Regional Director, Region 6

From:                Assistant Regional Director, National Wildlife Refuge System, Region 6

Subject:             Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Burned Area Emergency Stabilization  
and Rehabilitation Plan Executive Summary

The Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Montana has experienced drought conditions from 1998 to the present time. The Refuge was in extreme fire danger conditions in August 2003. The Winslow Fire (F271) was started on private land by a lightning strike. The fire made several fast runs over the course of the next few days. The fire continued to burn until the snow flew and was considered controlled on October 27, 2003. The Winslow fire burned approximately 13,558 acres (966 acres were burned on Refuge land with the remainder occurring on private land and lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management and by the U.S. Forest Service). A post-fire survey showed that numerous fence posts were damaged by burn-out operations during suppression activities, mainly along the west boundary of the Refuge. Also, the threat of noxious weed invasion is prevalent in the area of the Refuge where the suppression activities occurred.

In November and December 2003, the Refuge Manager and Biologist compiled a request for Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) funding in the amount of \$33,395 to repair the fence and inventory and control noxious weeds that were caused by the wildfire. Although the fire burned intensely at times, driven by high winds, the Refuge Manager has concluded that natural regeneration should adequately reclaim the affected areas if damaged fences are immediately replaced or repaired and the noxious weeds are controlled. The principal emergency concerns of the Refuge and proposed strategies for dealing with them are presented in the Winslow Fire (271) ESR Plan (Rehabilitation Plan), which is attached. According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) policy, Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER)/ESR fund requests up to \$500,000 may be approved by the Regional Director after concurrence by the Regional Fire Management Coordinator (RFMC) that the plan fits the technical definition for the

use of rehabilitation funds. After reviewing the Red Rock Lakes NWR's Rehabilitation Plan, we recommend that the request for \$33,395 for Burned Area ESR funds be approved. The proposed actions outlined in the plan and supporting documents meet the intent of the Fish and Wildlife Service Fire Management Handbook of stabilizing and preventing unacceptable resource degradation; restoring or establishing healthy, stable ecosystems; and replacing minor structures (including fences) that are damaged by the fires.

Upon approval, this plan will compete for appropriated rehabilitation funding with other Department of the Interior requests using common criteria as established by the National Rehabilitation Coordinators in consultation with the Office of Wildland Fire Coordination. Based on the rankings, funds may or may not be available to complete the planned Rehabilitation Plan.

We recommend that approval of the plan be subject to the following stipulations:

1. An electronic copy of the approved Rehabilitation Plan must be submitted to the Fire Management Branch, and the project must be entered into the National Wildland Fire Operational Reporting System (NFPORS) prior to funding approval.
2. Only burned fences on the boundary of the Winslow Fire may be replaced with rehabilitation funding.
3. Fire-funded and non-fire-funded personnel may charge their base 8 hours and overtime to rehabilitation when performing rehabilitation activities. Because rehabilitation is a non-emergency activity, careful planning should eliminate any need for overtime.
4. Accountable equipment may not be purchased with 9262 funds.
5. Rehabilitation funding may be provided for up to 3 years; however, funding is approved 1 fiscal year at a time, and funds can only be expended on approved activities in the fiscal year for which they are approved. Additional years of funding for activities and treatments must be resubmitted for approval each fiscal year and must re-compete with rehabilitation requests from all Department of the Interior bureaus for available funding.
6. No funds shall be fund-targeted to the Refuge account. The Refuge is authorized to charge the costs of the approved projects against the emergency fire rehabilitation account: 61570-9262-XXXX, where "XXXX" is the project number established by the Fire Management Branch.
7. All rehabilitation project charge codes will be closed at the end of each fiscal year. A new project charge code will be issued after receipt of all necessary plan amendments and annual accomplishment reports, and the appropriate NFPORS Rehabilitation and Restoration module entries are completed. If the cost estimates will exceed the authorized amount by more than 5 percent, a written request that accounts for the money spent up to that point, describes what additional work must be done and the estimated cost, and explains why the cost is

- higher than originally estimated must be approved by the Regional Director.
9. Refuge staff must monitor the effectiveness of all treatments and keep the RJFMC informed of the progress and effectiveness of the BAER/ESR activities. Any rehabilitation project without written monitoring documentation from this fiscal year will not be funded for the next year. A summary report should be sent to the Regional Refuge Supervisor and RFMC at the completion of each stage of the project, or at least twice a year until the project is completed. The accomplishment reports shall include sections addressing planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, maintenance, and treatment effectiveness, and provide a breakdown of costs for individual treatments. An electronic copy of the final accomplishment report will be sent to the Fire Management Branch within 90 days of completion of the project.
  10. All treatments and procurement activities should comply with applicable Service policy and standards, including wilderness guidelines and endangered species consultations.

Attachment:

1. Winslow Fire Rehab Plan

**Winslow Fire (F271)**  
**BURNED AREA EMERGENCY STABILIZATION AND REHABILITATION (ESR) PLAN**

**AGENCY/UNIT:** Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

**LOCATION:** Lima, Beaverhead County, Montana

**DATE:** December 15, 2003

**PREPARED BY:** Greg M. Dehmer, Refuge Manager

Submitted By:

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

This plan has been prepared in accordance with specify agency policy. This plan provides burned area emergency stabilization and rehabilitation (ESR) recommendations for all lands burned within the Winslow Fire perimeter and downstream impact areas including: public lands administered by the specify agency and other jurisdiction if necessary. The primary objectives of the Winslow Fire Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) Plan are:

#### Emergency Stabilization

- To prescribe cost effective post-fire stabilization measures necessary to protect human life, property, and critical cultural and natural resources.
- To promptly stabilize and prevent further degradation to affected resources on lands within the fire perimeter or downstream impact areas and mitigate damages caused by fire suppression operations in accordance with approved land management plans and policies, and all relevant federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

#### Rehabilitation

- To repair or improve lands unlikely to recover naturally from severe wildland fire damage by emulating historic or pre-fire ecosystem structure, function, diversity, and dynamics according to approved land management plans.
- Restore or establish healthy, stable ecosystems, even if these ecosystems cannot fully emulate historic or pre-fire conditions as specified in approved land management plans.

This plan addresses emergency stabilization and rehabilitation of fire suppression and fire damages.

The burned area has been surveyed for resource damage. The team has determined that natural regeneration should reclaim the affected areas if damaged fences are immediately replace/repared. This will allow the protection of the burned areas from grazing by adjacent landowners and will promote natural regeneration. All damaged fences have been identified. Specifics are found in the attached map showing damaged areas.

A summary of the costs by jurisdictions is in Part E. Appendix II contains the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance documentation summary. Appendix HI contains the ESR Plan maps.

### Fire Background

The Winslow fire was started on August 12, 2003 on private land by a lightning strike. The fire made several fast runs over the course of the next few days and was under the command of a Type III State of Montana Incident Management team. The fire posed an immediate threat to several private homes and many buildings in Lakeview, MT. Structure protection was initiated on buildings that were in danger. Over the next few weeks the fire grew in size and intensity and was given over to a Type II Incident Management team. Two Type II teams came and went with the fire eventually being turned back over to a Type III team.

Cooler weather conditions and some showers slowed the fire intensity considerably. The fire burned for another week under the command of the Type in team and was finally put in a monitoring status with the majority of the crews demobilized. The fire continued to burn until the snow flew and was considered Controlled on October 27, 2003.

Many resources were involved with the suppression of the fire from hand crews and engines to as many as five helicopters and two Air Tankers. Many structures were threatened and protection of those homes was a priority.

### **Fire Damages and Threats to Human Safety and Natural and Cultural Resources**

Numerous fence posts were damaged by burn out operations during suppression activities. These damages occurred mainly along the West boundary of the refuge south of Red Rock Pass Road.

The threat of noxious weed invasion is prevalent in the area on the refuge where burn out operations occurred. These areas will need careful monitoring and treatment over the course of several years.

### **Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Management Requirements**

The area lies within the Red Rock Lakes NWR which is located within a Designated Wilderness Area. This area has numerous restrictions and is completely non-motorized. This area is very popular for hunters, photographers and bird watchers.

### **Rehabilitation**

The following statements in approved Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge management plans justify the proposed burned area rehabilitation treatments funded with Burned Area Rehabilitation funds.

"Restore native grass and plant species by elimination of introduced plant species," (pg. 3 Final Environmental Assessment for Management of Upland Habitats, Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Ralph Morgenwick, Regional Director, Region 6, September 14, 1994.)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

REVIEW AND APPROVAL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART A - FIRE LOCATION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION .....	2
PART B - NATURE OF PLAN .....	2
PART C - EMERGENCY STABILIZATION AND REHABILITATION ASSESSMENT .....	3
PART D - TEAM ORGANIZATION, MEMBERS, AND RESOURCE ADVISORS .....	3
PART E - SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES AND COSTS .....	4
PART F - INDIVIDUAL TREATMENT SPECIFICATIONS .....	6
PART G - POST-REHABILITATION REQUIREMENT .....	7
PART H - CONSULTATIONS.....	8
APPENDIX I - ESR BURNED AREA ASSESSMENT REPORT.....	9
APPENDIX II - ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE .....	K)
APPENDIX III - MAPS..	..14

**PART A - FIRE LOCATION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Fire Name	Winslow Fire
Fire Number	61570-9141-F271
Agency Unit	Red Rock Lakes NWR
Region	6
State	MT
County(s)	Beaverhead
Ignition Date/Cause	8/12/2003, Lightning
Date Controlled	10/27/2003
USFWS	966 Acres
BLM Dillon, MT FO	6,111 Acres
Caribou-Targhee NF	4,612 Acres
Private Ownership	1,869 Acres
Total Acres	13,558 Acres

**PART B - NATURE OF PLAN**

I. Type of Plan (check one box below)

	Emergency Stabilization
X	Rehabilitation
	Both Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation

II. Type of Action (check one box below)

X	Initial Submission
	Updating or Revising the Initial Submission
	Supplying Information of Accomplishment to Date on Work
	Different Phase of Project
	Final Accomplishment Report (To Comply with the Closure of the 9262 Account)

**PART C - EMERGENCY STABILIZATION AND REHABILITATION ASSESSMENT**

Rehabilitation Objectives

- Prevent aggressive re-growth and re-establishment of undesirable exotic plant species such as Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*) and Russian knapweed (*Acroptilon repens*).
- Rehabilitate burned boundary infrastructure, i.e. boundary fence post replacement.

**PART D - TEAM ORGANIZATION, MEMBERS, AND RESOURCE ADVISORS**

I. Approval Authorities

Activities Requiring Regional/State/Headquarters Approval Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (charged to BAR)	Status	Cost
Fence Post Cost, Removal and Installation	P	\$1,895
Exotic plant species control	P	\$31,500
Subtotal		\$33,395

Status: C=Completed; O=Ongoing; P=Planned

(Total Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Costs	\$3 3,395
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II. Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) Team Members: *(List of technical specialists used to develop the plan)*

Position	Team Member (Agency)
Team Leader/Refuge Manger	Greg M. Dehmer
Biologist	Shilo Comeau
Biological Technician	Jeff Warren

III. Resource Advisors: (Note: Resource Advisors are individuals who assisted the ESR Team with the preparation of the plan. See Part H for a full list of agencies and individuals who were consulted or otherwise contributed to the development of the plan.

Name	Affiliation
Bob Rebarchik	USFWS, Zone Fire Management Officer, Missoula, MT

**PART E - SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES AND COSTS**

The summary of activities and cost table below identifies emergency stabilization and rehabilitation costs charged or proposed for funding from Suppression Operations, Burned Area Rehabilitation, agency operation, and other funding sources. Expenditures are displayed in the total cost column. They are coded with the appropriate cost authority. The total cost of the rehabilitation effort to date, excluding the costs absorbed by the fire account (fire crews, labor, and associated overhead) is displayed as either Suppression Operations (F), Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR), Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP), or Agency Operations/Other (O/OP) or other.

Fire Name: Winslow Fire As

of: December 10, 2003

Specification Cost Summary

Account	Dollars	Dollars
Fire Suppression Activity Damage Rehabilitation (F)		
Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR)		\$33,395
Emergency Stabilization	\$	
Rehabilitation	S	
Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP)		
Agency Operations/Other (OP/O)		
Funding Summary - Estimated Total		\$33,395



## PART F - INDIVIDUAL TREATMENT SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION TITLE:		AGENCY:	FWS
PART E LINE ITEM:		FISCAL YEAR(S) (list each year):	

**I. WORK TO BE DONE** (describe or attach exact specifications of work to be done):

**Number and Describe Each Task:** Replace all burnt posts on refuge boundary fence within Winslow Fire Boundary on refuge. Monitor and Treat lands for exotic plant invasion.

**A. General Description:** see attached map for post replacement  
see attached map for weed monitoring

**B. Location/(Suitable) Sites:** see attached map for post replacement  
see attached map for weed monitoring

**C. Design/Construction Specifications:**

1. Replace existing burnt posts with new posts
2. Monitor weed growth and treat as necessary

**D. Purpose of Treatment Specifications:** Fence protects refuge from uncontrolled grazing and trespass  
Weed control protects native plants from exotic plants that will out-compete native plants and infest the refuge

**E. Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring Proposed:** Photo's and onsite observation

**II. LABOR, MATERIALS AND OTHER COST:**

* PERSONNEL SERVICES: (Grade & Cost/Hours X # Hours X # Fiscal Years = Cost/Item): Do not include contract personnel costs here (see contractor services below).	COST/ITEM
WG-8 for 40 hours, GS-5 for 40 hours	\$1,400.00
GS-5 for 4 months for 3 years	\$25,500.00
TOTAL PERSONNEL SERVICE COST	\$26,900.00
* EQUIPMENT PURCHASE, LEASE AND/OR RENT (Item @ Cost/Hour X # of Hours X #Fiscal Years = Cost/Item): Note: Purchases require written justification that demonstrates cost benefits over leasing or renting.	COST/ITEM
TOTAL EQUIPMENT PURCHASE, LEASE OR RENTAL COST	
* MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES (Item @ Cost/Each X Quantity X #Fiscal Years = Cost/Item):	COST/ITEM
Line Posts: 90 @ \$5.50/fea Chemical & Misc. Supplies: \$2,000/year x 3 years	\$495.00
TOTAL MATERIALS AND SUPPLY COST	\$6,000.00 \$6,495.00
+ TRAVEL COST (Personnel or Equipment @. Rate X Round Trips X #Fiscal Years = Cost/Item):	COST/ITEM
TOTAL TRAVEL COST	
* CONTRACT COST (Labor or Equipment @, Cost/Hour X #Hours X #Fiscal Years = Cost/Item):	COST/ITEM
TOTAL CONTRACT COST	

**SPECIFICATION COST SUMMARY**

FISCAL YEAR	UNIT	UNITS COST	# OF UNITS	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	METHOD
FY04	Winslow Fire	SI, 895	1.0	\$1,895	BAR	P
FY04	Winslow Fire	510,500	10	510,500	BAR	P
FY05	Winslow Fire	510,500	1.0	510,500	BAR	P
FY06	Winslow Fire	\$10,500	1.0	510,500	BAR	P
FY_						
TOTAL		\$33,395	4.0	\$33,395	BAR	P

<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b>	<b>METHODS</b>
F - Suppression Operations	P - Agency Personnel Services
BAR - Burned Area Rehabilitation	C - Contract (long-term)
EVVP - Emergency Watershed Protection	EFC - Emergency Fire Contract (short-term)
OP/O - Agency Operations/Other	FC - Incident Management Crew Assignment

**SOURCE OF COST ESTIMATE**

1.	Estimate obtained from 2-3 independent contractual sources.	
2.	Documented cost figures from similar project work obtained from local agency sources.	X
3.	Estimate supported by cost guides from independent sources or other federal agencies	
4.	Estimates based upon government wage rates and material cost.	X

P = Personnel Services, E = Equipment M = Materials/Supplies, T = Travel, C = Contract, F = Suppression

**III. RELEVANT DETAILS, MAPS AND DOCUMENTATION INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT:**

5.	No cost estimate required - cost charged to Fire Suppression Account	
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**List Relevant Documentation and Cross-Reference Location within ESR Plan Accomplishment Report (for Rehabilitation treatments quote (include page number, approving officials name, and date approved for review and auditing purposes) pertinent passages from approved land management plans:**

**PART G - POST-REHABILITATION REQUIREMENT<sup>1</sup>**

The following are post-rehabilitation, implementation, operation, maintenance, monitoring, and evaluation actions beyond three years to ensure the effectiveness of initial investments. Estimated annual cost and funding source is indicated.

Rehabilitation

1. Monitor habitat/riparian vegetation recovery (\$ 1,000 - OP/O)

Non-9262 funding

## **PART H - CONSULTATIONS**

Bureau of Land Management - Dillon Field Office

Brad Gillespie, Fire Management Specialist

Joe Casey, Forester

Laurie Blinn, GIS Specialist Montana Department of

Natural Resources and Conservation

Bob Lawrence, Dillon Unit Fire Supervisor; Incident Commander

LeRoy Hanhkamp, Dillon Unit Fire Team Lead

Ward Heisterman, Senior Engine Boss

## APPENDIX I - ESR BURNED AREA ASSESSMENT REPORTS

### Winslow Fire Resource Damage Assessment Report

#### I. Objectives

To determine the damage to Red Rock Lakes Refuge resources during the Winslow Fire. It was found that many individual line posts on the refuge sw boundary damaged/destroyed by the fire due to suppression activities.

#### II. Issues

Insuring that exotic plant species do not gain a foothold in the burn area which is a designated Wilderness Area.

#### III. Observations

##### A. Background Information

Fences are a critical element of the natural regeneration of the burned areas. Fences allow managers the latitude to rest areas from livestock grazing from one to three years following a fire or to keep neighboring cattle off the ground and successfully defend refuge lands. This is a key in promoting natural regeneration of native grass, shrubs and forbs.

##### B. Reconnaissance Method

The burn area was assessed by foot to map and survey fences and areas where exotic plants will likely grow.

##### C. Findings

The area will naturally regenerate, dependent upon fence rehabilitation and limiting the spreading of noxious weeds.

#### IV. Recommendations

##### A. Management (specification related)

Replace damaged fence posts and rest units from livestock grazing from 1-3 years. Monitor and treat areas infested with exotic plant species.

##### B. Specification Monitoring (specification related)

Evaluate the areas after fence posts have been replaced to see how regeneration is progressing. Any additional rehabilitation will be determined upon further evaluation, one and two years after the burn.

#### V. Consultations

Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Staff

#### VI. References

Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Fire management Plan, April 2002

Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Final Environmental Assessment for Management of Upland Habitats, September 14, 1994

## **APPENDIX II - ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE**

### **Federal, State, and Private Lands Environmental Compliance Responsibilities**

All projects proposed in the Winslow Fire Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) Plan that are prescribed, funded, or implemented by Federal agencies on Federal, State, or private lands are subject to compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fire Management Handbook (Release 7/17/00) and 095 FW3, 3.9 B,C. This Appendix documents the ESR Team considerations of NEPA compliance requirements for prescribed rehabilitation and monitoring actions described in this plan for all jurisdictions affected by the Winslow burned area emergency.

### **Related Plans and Cumulative Impact Analysis**

Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Final Environmental Assessment for the Management of Upland Habitats, July 1994 was reviewed and it was determined that actions proposed in the Winslow Fire ESR Plan within the boundary of the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge are consistent with the management objectives established in the FEA.

### **Cumulative Impact Analysis**

Cumulative effects are the environmental impacts resulting from the incremental impacts of a proposed action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, both Federal and non-Federal. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor, but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. The emergency protection and rehabilitation treatments for areas affected by the Winslow Fire, as proposed in the Winslow Fire ESR Plan, do not result in an intensity of impact (i.e. major ground disturbance, etc.) that would cumulatively constitute a significant impact on the quality of the environment. The treatments are consistent with the above jurisdictional management plans and associated environmental compliance documents and categorical exclusions listed below.

### **Applicable and Relevant Categorical Exclusions**

The individual actions proposed in this plan for rehabilitation of the Winslow Fire are Categorically Excluded from further environmental analysis as provided for in DM 516, DM 6, Appendix 1, 1.4 (4), (5), (6), (9), and (11).

### **Statement of Compliance for the Winslow Fire Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan.**

This section documents consideration given to the requirements of specific environmental laws in the development of the Winslow Fire ESR Plan. Specific consultations initiated or completed during development and implementation of this plan are also documented. The following executive orders and legislative acts have been reviewed as they apply to the Winslow Fire ESR Plan:

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).  
Executive Order 11988. Floodplain Management.  
Executive Order 11990. Protection of Wetlands.  
Executive Order 12372. Intergovernmental Review.  
Executive Order 12892. Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-income Populations. Endangered Species Act. Secretarial Order 3127. Federal Contaminated  
Clean Water Act. Clean Air Act.

would not involve any significant environmental effect. Therefore it is categorically excluded from further environmental (NEPA) review and documentation. ESR Team technical specialists have completed necessary coordination and consultation to insure compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act and other Federal, State and local environment review requirements.

ESR Team Environmental Protection Specialist

Date

Project Deader, Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

**NEPA Checklist:** If any of the following exception applies, the ESR Plan cannot be Categorical Excluded and an Environmental Assessment (EA) is required.

(Yes) (No)

- Adversely affect Public Health and Safety   Adversely affect historic or cultural resources, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers aquifers, prime farmlands, wetlands, floodplains, ecologically critical areas, or Natural Landmarks.
- Have highly controversial environmental effects.   Have highly uncertain environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.
- Establish a precedent resulting in significant environmental effects.   Relates to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.   Adversely effects properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Adversely affect a species listed or proposed to be listed as Threatened or Endangered.
- Threaten to violate any laws or requirements imposed for the "protection of the environment" such as Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) or Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands).

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

Ground Disturbance:

- None
- Ground disturbance did occur and an archeologist survey, required under section 110 of the NHPA will be prepared. A report-will be prepared under contract as specified by the ESR Plan.

A NHPA Clearance Form:

- Is required because the project may have affected a site that is eligible or on the national register. The clearance form is attached. SHPO has been consulted under Section 106 (see Cultural Resource Assessment, Appendix I).  Is not required because the ESR Plan has no potential to affect cultural resources (initial of cultural resource specialist).

### **Other Requirements**

- (Yes) (No)   Does the ESR Plan have potential to affect any Native American uses? If so, consultation with affiliated tribes is needed.   Are any toxic chemicals, including pesticides or treated wood, proposed for use? If so, local agency integrated pest management specialists must be consulted.

I have reviewed the proposals in the Winslow Fire Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan in accordance with the criteria above and have determined that the proposed actions



